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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - PRIME MINISTER, SPEAKER, MEDIA REACT TO  
YUSUF'S RESIGNATION

REF: NAIROBI 2879

11. (SBU) Summary: In remarks to the media following Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Yusuf's December 29 resignation (reftel), the TFG Prime Minister and Speaker offered generally muted praise to the President for leaving office and thanks to the international community for the role it has played. Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) Chairman Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed made no public comment about Yusuf's resignation. An aide ascribed Sheikh Sharif's silence to the lack of a suitable forum in which to comment. The Somalia media were generally reserved, reporting the facts of the address to Parliament with only a bit of anti-Yusuf commentary. End summary.

Prime Minister and Speaker Offer Diplomatic Praise  
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12. (SBU) In remarks to the media in the hours following TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf's December 29 resignation (reftel), TFG Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein Nur Adde offered only muted praise for the former President. Hussein hoped Yusuf "would become a Somali elder who will play a substantial role in the peace process and the country's development," and termed his resignation a giant step along the road toward democracy. Hussein assured the Speaker of his complete support as he supervised the transition to a new president, and urged other TFG officials, the militias, and the public to continue to work for reconciliation.

13. (SBU) In a press conference immediately after escorting Yusuf to the Baidoa airport December 29, Speaker of Parliament Sheikh Aden Madobe seemed more focused on a potential security vacuum than the President's resignation. Madobe asked the public to remain calm and hoped, with the support of the international community, that Yusuf's departure would not trigger "chaos." Madobe promised that no one would be victimized during the transition period. (Reports from Baidoa suggest that Madobe remains preoccupied with security: he spent most of December 30 huddled with security and law enforcement representatives.) In comments to BBC later December 29, Madobe praised Yusuf for voluntarily relinquishing power, unlike "other African statesmen."

Sheikh Sharif Silent  
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14. (SBU) Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) Chairman Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed to date has remained silent on the issue of Yusuf's resignation. An aide to Sheikh Sharif in Mogadishu told us December 30 that there had not yet been an appropriate opportunity to comment, and that the ARS leader did not want to force the issue. In an interview published the day of Yusuf's resignation, but

probably conducted earlier, Sheikh Sharif defended the ARS's alliance with the TFG, without mentioning the conflict between the President and the Prime Minister.

Somali Media Generally Reserved  
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15. (SBU) Somali media outlets, often not bashful with their commentary, generally stuck to the facts of the resignation. Most articles and reports repeated the details of the address to Parliament and submission of the resignation letter, and several reviewed details of Yusuf's nearly-40-year career in the Somali military and politics. One outlet described the genesis of Yusuf's resignation as "a vinegary power struggle in the country's beleaguered transitional government" and asserted that Yusuf "made no tangible progress" while President. An editorial on a Somali website stated that, "Disagreements and public squabbling between the President and the Prime Minister led to the resignation of the President after he was pressured by an international community which saw him as an obstacle to peace." Another media outlet noted that, "(Yusuf's) close alliance with the Ethiopian military alienated many Somalis who consider the Ethiopians as occupiers."

Comment  
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16. (SBU) Neither the Prime Minister nor the Speaker offered the more extensive praise that we had urged in the days preceding the President's resignation. Their long struggle with Yusuf seemed to have left Hussein and Madobae unable to

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use the opportunity to reassure jittery members of Yusuf's circle as the TFG begins an effort to create a unity government with members of the ARS.  
RANNEBERGER